# 15 Aborting the human race

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> [M]an is by nature a political animal. He who is stateless by nature and not just by chance is either subhuman or superhuman, like the man reviled by Homer as 'classless, lawless, hearthless'; for being naturally without a state, he is a lover of war and may be compared to an unprotected piece in a game of draughts. (Aristotle, *Politics*).
>
> Perceived under the perspective of action, Nietzsche's work is an abortion... (Georges Bataille).

## I

However else it is possible to divide Western thinking, one fissure can be teased-open separating the theo-humanists - croaking together in the cramped and malodorous pond of Anthropos - from the wild beasts of the impersonal. The former are characterized by their moral fervour, parochialism, earnestness, phenomenological disposition, and sympathy for folk superstition; the latter by their fatalism, atheism, strangely reptilian exuberance, and extreme sensitivity for what is icy, savage, and alien to mankind. Nietzsche is perhaps the greatest of all anti-humanist writers. At the very least, his writings attest to the most powerful eruption of impersonality in the occidental world since it was rotted by the blight of the Nazarene. It is possible that Herakleitus was more effortlessly inhuman, and that - beneath the shadow of the cross - Spinoza and Sade occasionally reach a comparable pitch of anegoic coldness, but nowhere outside Nietzsche's texts is there an antipersonalistic war-machine of equivalent ferocity.

It is deliberate ignorance of Schopenhauer which allows humanist readings of Nietzsche to proliferate so shamelessly; readings in which a so-called 'superman' prefigures an existential choice for mankind, in which eternal recurrence is a personal - or even ethical - predicament, in which affirmation is an act of voluntary consent, will to power is a psychological description of self-assertion, and values are subjectively legislated idealities.

It should not be necessary explicitly to recollect that, on the basis of his reading of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche assumed the unconsciousness and impersonality of will or desire, and never indicates a regression to a Kantian/humanist understanding of this matter. Nor should it be necessary to re-assert the intrinsic connection between the will and the transcendental problematic of time, inherited from the same source. The same could be said about the obvious reference to Schopenhauer exhibited in the very expression 'will to power', the Schopenhauerian germ for the thought of 'rank-order' in that of 'grades of objectification', the architectonic connection between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche in terms of the history of philosophy, the crucial Schopenhauerian background to Nietsche's remarks about women, etc. Nietzsche's break with Schopenhauer is of extreme profundity, but it remains a break with Schopenhauer, rather than some kind of ahistorical existential inspiration.

If stressing the importance of Schopenhauer to the entire sweep of Nietzsche's writing was merely to polemicize on behalf of elementary standards of scholarship, it would be a piece of academicist moralism of the shoddiest sort. The crucial issue is not that reading Nietzsche without reference to Schopenhauer gets Nietzsche wrong, but that it makes him more humane. Schopenhauer is the great well-spring of the impersonal in post-Kantian thought; the sole member of the immediately succeeding generation to begin vomiting monotheism out of their cosmology in order to attack the superstition of self. The repression of Schopenhauer's thinking is continuous with the co-option of Nietzsche back into the monotheistic/humanistic fold of ontologically grounded subjects, real choices, existential individuation, irreducible persons, ethical norms, and suchlike metaphysical garbage. Whether or not some kind of tentative antihumanism is then launched on the basis of a quasi-phenomenological or deconstructive gesture, is scarcely a matter worthy of great excitement, except for those concerned to choose between Luther and the pope.

## II

That finality has been an overt issue throughout the history of modern philosophy has been mainly due to the struggle against the Aristotelian tendencies of scholasticism by the thinkers of the enlightenment. It is because of this history that finality is normally conceived in terms of an opposition between teleology and mechanism, or between final and efficient causation, since this distinction is the 17th and 18th century battle-front between the church and modern science. Finality was associated above all with the teleological argument for the existence of God - the argument from design - according to which nature is open to theological interpretation as the approximation to a divine blue-print.

For Aristotle the theological dimension of teleology is closely bound to its libidinal dimension, since desire is understood as a tendency towards an intrinsic perfection whose ultimate key-stone is the sufficiency of God. The telos or goal of all striving is something presupposed by activity, such that desire must already have received its potential for realization extrinsically, thus preserving the Platonic association between Eros and subordination. Both Aristotelian and scholastic usage of teleology is dependent upon the thought of originary perfection or God, subordinating desire to the sufficiency of complete being. In other words, theological time is encompassed by perfection or absolute achievement, which enslaves becoming to a timeless potential of that which becomes. Such a potential is a design, archetype, or plan, existing ideally and eternally in the supreme intellect, and usurping all creativity from nature.

For those familiar with the general tenor of Kant's attempt to harmonize the competing ideologies of established authority and progress, the predominant character of his response to the problem of finality will be something less than shocking. The combination of theoretical agnosticism and practical apologetics, which he employs in the first two critiques in order to legitimate a responsible space for science alongside instituted power, is still operative in the third. The potential of the theologians is smuggled into the *Critique of Judgement* as the possibility of a complete system of science, a regulative idea which derives from the originary perfection of reason. Even though teleology loses its right to dogmatic theorizing, it continues to guide the thought of nature in terms of the infinitely accomplished idea.

In order not to inhibit the development of the sciences Kant de-naturalizes teleology, lodging its redoubt in his practical philosophy, and therefore in reason. A rational being or persona is to be practically

conceived not as a natural entity - a delirious close of matter - but as an end in itself; imbued a *priori* with a potential for perfect goodness that is only sullied by the pathological factors of its animal existence. The realization of the human perfection that is embryonically presupposed by reason is the endless task of morality, wherein process approximates to the timeless form of its utter accomplishment. It is thus that, like Plato, Aristotle, and the Church, Kant thinks goodness as perfectly instituted in advance, as a supersensibly derived potential.

Schopenhauer seeks to extricate the though of finality from this theological framework, but his success is strictly limited. Although he eradicates the theological dogma of originary intellect from his philosophy he continues to rely on the notion of Platonic Ideas to interpret natural processes, and thus succumbs in turn to the finalist doctrine of potential, in the form of a Kantian transcendental perfectionism. Schopenhauer, too, deprives desire of creativity, by conceiving all its possible consequences as eternal potentialities of the noumenal will. Desire as the will to life is merely the perpetual re-instantiation of pre-given forms.

Despite the problems to which he succumbs, Schopenhauer's philosophy makes a number of important advances, by initiating a war against the intellectualist interpretation of will, beginning the rigorous separation of affective intensity from phenomenality, and germinating a philosophy of scalar or stratal difference. In three crucial anti-Kantian gestures he argues that 'the *will* always appears as the primary and fundamental thing, and throughout asserts its pre-eminence over the intellect' (Schopenhauer III, 231), that '[p]henomenon means representation and nothing more' (Schopenhauer I, 154), whilst 'we are quite wrong in calling pain and pleasure representations' (I, 144], and continually refers to 'the ascending series of animal organizations', 'the scale of animals' (III, 327), and more generally to 'grades of the will's objectivity' (I, 179), or degrees of '*stimulation or excitment*' (III, 240). In Schopenhauer's philosophy such thinking remains uncomfortably wedded to a series of bilateral disjunctions between the transcendental and the empirical, subject and object, thing in itself and appearance, etc. , and is thus marshalled under the metaphysical dignity of man, whose nervous-system he describes as 'nature's final product' (III, 320). It nevertheless marks the departure of a voyage in intensity, one that Nietzsche exacerbates beyond the threshold of the irreparable.

## III

In his appendix to *The Metaphysics of Sexual Love* Schopenhauer cites the claim in Aristotle's *Politics* that: 'For children of people too old as well as too young leave much to be desired in both a physical and mental regard, and children of those in advanced years are weaklings'. A little later he comments:

> Aristotle, therefore, lays down that a man who is fifty-four years of age should not have any more children, though he may still continue cohabitation for the sake of his health or for any other reason. He does not say how this is to be carried into effect, but he is obviously of the opionion that children conceived when their parents are of such an age should be disposed of by abortion, for he had recommended this a few lines previously (IV, 660).

The contexts for this peculiar remark is a discussion of pederasty, or the libidinal architectonics of classical idealism. The philosophical or academic relation is homoerotic and inter-generational; a restricted pedagogy that mimics the unit of patrilineal reproduction. Schopenhauer's endeavour is to map out a descriptive eugenics that is able to provide biological intelligibility for such a relation, and the consequence - indicated by his Aristotle citation - is his suggestion that pederasty diverts young and old males from procreative sexuality, in order to forestall the racial deterioration that would result from the transmission of their inadequately formed or decrepit sperm. It is thus that a subterranean complicity is exposed between the Idea (or perfect form), patriarchy, and racial hygiene.

Pederasty substitutes for abortion, translating it into the homoerotic bond, and reproducing it in conformity with the dominion of achieved form. The radical abortion of tragedy and irredeemable waste is Socratically sublimated into the service of the Idea, becoming a police function of theistic sociality, within a political economy of managed sperm. There is a superficial pre-conscious stratum of Nietzsche's writing that harmonizes closely with such a politics, for instance the note numbered 734 in *The Will to Power* which argues:

> Society, as the great trustee of life, is responsible to life itself for every aborted life - it also has to pay for such lives: consequently it ought to prevent them. In numerous cases, society ought to prevent

> procreation: to this end, it may hold in readiness, without regard to descent, rank or spirit, the most rigorous means of constraint, deprivation of freedom, in certain circumstances castration (Nietzsche, III, 923).

There is little to perturb the Aristotelian legacy in such a remark, except for a strange interference between abortions and forestallings (the German series *verfehlen*, *verhindern*, *vorbeugen*). In Nietzsche's text abortion - in the loose sense Schopenhauer has opened - is both the possible outcome of procreative anarchy and that which characterizes a eugenic regime. Both of these senses are in play in his famous remark from *Ecce Homo*: 'no abortion was missing, not even the antisemite' (II, 1119). Procreation is aborted in order to avoid the procreation of abortions. If social institutions are to avoid being aborted, abortion must be socially institutionalized. If Nietzsche's argument is somewhat tangled at this point is is because something essential to the classical model of reason has miscarried.

Unlike the will to life, the will to power is not driven by the tendency to realize and sustain a potential, its sole impetus is that of overcoming itself. It has no motivating end, but only a propulsive source. It is in this sense that will to power is creative desire, without a pre-figured destination or anticipatory perfection. It is an arrow shot into the unconceived. Will to power names the pre-representational impetus for which life is a tool, and for which tendency is inextricable from intensity. At the heart of the terminological motor driving Nietzsche's writings lie a series of nouns of action, each of which subverts a dogma by designating a genealogical topic. Nietzsche transcribes *moralization* fully as 'the genealogy of morals', but the genealogy of logic is initiated under the compact rubric of equalization (or logicization), as is the case with eternalization, simplication, divinization, legislation, etc. It is in this way that will to power is transcribed into thought by the first stammerings of a positive atelelogical syntax.

Schopenhauer is a philosopher of primal non-differentiation because he conceives representation as individuating, according to the spatial and temporal isolation imposed by the principle of sufficent reason. Nietzsche recasts this principle into a general tendency to assimilation which he names 'equalization' (*Ausgleichung*), and it is this that makes him the first post-Kantian philosopher of difference. In his notes he succinctly asserts: 'the will to equality is the will to power' (III, 500). Despite superficial appearances, however, the difference between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche

is not simply that between thoughts of indifference and difference. It is more a question of phases in the emergent thinking of unilateral or non-reciprocal difference, which departs from the bilateral difference synonymous with ontology. Between the organic and the inorganic, for instance, there is not a bilateral or reciprocal exclusion, but rather a unilateral separation of the organic within the inorganic, such that the difference between the two is wholly immanent to the inorganic as primary term. This is the profound sense of economy: the energetic consistency between zero-intensity and its deviations, or between a noun of action and the antonym of its simple noun (e.g. between matter and spiritualization). It is because such consistency cannot be thought within the bilateral or non-contradiction logics traditionally countenanced that Schopenhauer was inhibited from its radical excavation.

The recurrence of the same cannot be differentiated from the unilaterality of difference, which is to say that recurrence is the consistency of difference with equalization. It is not that energy is what recurs as the same, but rather than energy is the economic sense of recurrence as unilateral consistency. Recurrence is not a configuration of energy or cosmic economy, but the very impact of undifferentiable zero; the abortion of transcendence. To think the real simultaneity of unsurpassable chaotic zero with the triumph of reactivity, such that the only repressed is the unrepressible, is to think recurrence, and any suggestion that eternal recurrence is a cosmology describable acording to a principle of non-contradiction is to entirely lose the matter of Nietzsche's excitement, i.e. the unilateral, materialist, or genealogical interpretation of difference. The sole philosophical rigor of recurrence splashes our of the pulverizing inundation of bilateral distinctions by indifferent matter. Spirit is different from matter and matter once again, culture is different from nature and nature once again, order is different from chaos and chaos once again, just as life is unilaterally different from death, plenitude from zero, reactive from active forces, etc. Transcendence is both real and impossible, as is the human race.

'Once again' is a term which Nietzsche's text binds inextricably to the rumour of eternal recurrence, for instance in Section 341 of *The Gay Science* - often taken to be the first 'announcement' of the doctrine of return - where Nietzsche twice uses the same formulation to describe recurrence, 'once again, and again innumerable times [*noch einmal and noch unzählige Male*]' (II,202). There are many places where this term plays a decisive role in his writings, amongst which are those marking the repressed unilaterality at the base of metaphysical binarities, for example

in his notebooks he remarks:

> The 'A' of logic is, like the atom, a reconstruction of the thing. If we do not grasp this, but make of logic a criterion of true being, we are on the way to positing as realities all those hypostases: substance, attribute, object, subject, action, etc.; that is, to conceiving a metaphysical world, that is, a 'real world' (- *this, however, is the apparent world once again* -) (III,538).

> The 'real world', however one has hitherto conceived it - it has always been the apparent world *once again* (III,689).

Spirit is different from matter and matter once again, culture is different from nature and nature once again, order is different from chaos and chaos once again, just as life is unilaterally different from death, plenitude from zero, reactive from active forces, etc. Transcendence is both real and impossible as is the human race.

Whether of Judaic of Platonic inspiration, monotheism rests upon hypostatizing the differential element of the human animal. It is because spirit, personality, reason, and law have all been taken as defining characteristics of man, that one finds the cosmos crushed under an absolute spirit, an infinite personality, pure reason, and perfect justice. When confronted by the gothic intimidation synonymous with Western culture it is hard to re-excavate the fact that one is merely dealing with a beast advantaged by a measure of superior cunning, a hypertrophic facility for the transfer of information, and an opposable thumb.

The meaning of humanity is abuse of the vanquished; the transformation of intensive difference into metaphysical disjunction. The libidinal sense of Platonism, for instance, is the paralyzation of an intensive ascent in accordance with an exhaustive concept. Intensive spiritualization is fixed as consummate spirit, thus leveling out desire onto the stagnant plateau of theological idealism dominated by Christendom. Upon this plateau progress in extension remains possible - scientific, technical, and industrial growth for instance - but such development is rigidly constrained by its infrastructural libidinal petrification; imprisoned in the humanity whose first instance was Socrates, and whose horizonal limit is Christ.

The broad strokes of Nietzsche's diagnosis are well known:

> I count life itself as an instinct for growth, for duration, for amassing of force for *power*: where the will to power is lacking there is

> decline. My assertion is that this will is *lacking* for all the highest values of humanity - that decline-values, *nihilistic* values, pursue dominion under the most hallowed names (II, 1167-8).

It is the devaluation of the highest values, the convulsion at the zenith of nihilism, that aborts the human race. Having polarized the high and the low in extension, humanity finds itself destituted of its idols - which have purified themselves into overt inexistence - and is thereby plunged vertiginously into its abjected values; animality, pathology, sensuality, and materiality. At the end of human civilization there is thus a regression driven by zero, a violent spasm of relapse whose motor is the cavity of an extinct telos; the death of God. Zero religion.

As a creature of zero, the overman is not a conceptually intelligible advance upon humanity. Any such thing is, in any case, strictly impossible. Humanity cannot be exacerbated, but only aborted. It is first necessary to excavate the embryonic anthropoid beast at the root of man, in order to re-open the intensive series in which it is embedded. If the overman is an ascent beyond humanity, it is only in the sense of being a redirection of its intensive foetus. This is why the overman is predominantly regressive; a step back from extension in order to leap in intensity, like the drawing-back of a bow-string.

The zero is the transmission element which integrates active and reactive impulses at the end of the great Platonic divorce between nature and culture. Zero is undifferentiable without being a unity, and everything is re-engaged through zero. Eternal recurrence - the most nihilistic thought - begins everything again, as history is re-energized through the nihilistic indifferentiation between zero enthusiasm and enthusiasm for zero. Passive nihilism is the zero of religion, whilst active nihilism is the religion of the zero. On the one hand Schopenhauer's metaphysical pessimism as 'a European Buddhism' (Nietzsche II, 767), on the other Nietzsche's Dionysian pessimism as the exultation of dissolution. Within the order of bilateralized representation the 'will to nothingness' (II, 837) is of profound ambivalence:

> 'either abolish your reverence or - *your self*!' The latter would be nihilism; but would not the former also be - nihilism? - This is *our* question mark (II, 212).

Nihilism as concrete history is Christianity, and it is only because Christianity is as impossible as it is real that nature escapes from being

stigmatized to its foundations by the cult of the Nazarene. Christianity as inconsistency with matter recurs consistently with matter and thus inconsistently with itself. This is the motor of nihilism; the great zero, and the impersonal generator of nature and culture in their incompossible consistency.

Christianity, as Nietzsche insists over and over again in *The Antichrist*, is Judaism *once again* [*noch einmal*]. 'Once again came the popular expectation of a Messiah into the foreground' (II, 1202) he writes in section 40 of *The Antichrist*, and two pages later, getting a little carried away: 'once again the priest-instinct of the Jews perpetrated the same great crime against history' (II, 1204). Against the tide of Teutonic antisemitism, with its project of Hellenizing, Aryanizing, and Wagnerizing Christ, Nietzsche is obsessive in his claim that Christianity is nothing except a recurrence of Jewish monotheism; which is not a mere repetition, but a return that both exacerbates and corrodes 'The Christian, this *ultima ratio* of the lie, is the Jew once again - three times even' (Ibid., 1206). Europe is a population whose history has fallen prey to the zealots of the One; victim to the spreading ripple from the same catastrophe of monotheism which culturally vivisected the ancient Hebrew warrior tribes into the broken rabble of apostle's and first christians, huddling in wretched destitution beneath the shadow of the cross.

'Once again' - recurrence - does not say that an identity is repeated, except when thought is devastated by the reciprocity of reason and the mono-logic of the same. Monotheism is not repeated, but nihilistically exacerbated by unilateral zero, and driven irresistably into the death of God where it consummates its truth. There is a savage rigor to Nietzsche's thinking here:

> [T]he little rebellious movement, baptized in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, is the Jewish instinct *once again*, in other words, the priest-instinct, which no longer tolerates the priest as a reality, the invention of a yet more destitute form of existence, a yet more unreal vision of the world, than that which conditions the organization of a church. Christianity *denies* the church...(II, 1189).

When Nietzsche's loathing for Christianity reaches its crescendo it becomes an obsessive reiteration of the One. One, one, one, over and over again, monotono-theism (II, 1179) as Nietzsche calls it; a God whose speculative triad collapses everything into the one, the Father, Son and Spirit, power, benevolence, and knowledge, the simplicity, equality, and

ontological individuality of the soul, the entire universe crumpled up together by a phallic fanaticism for monolithic form. Christian trinitarianism is the demonstration that everything comes back to One unless it is zero. To set up the question of difference as a conflict between the one and the many is a massive strategic blunder - the Occident lost its way at this point- the real issue is not one or many, but many and zero. Nietzsche writes:

> Wherever there are walls I shall inscribe this eternal accusation against Christianity upon them - I can write in letters which make even the blind see...I call Chritianity the *one* great curse, the *one* great instinct depravity, the *one* great instinct for revenge for which no expedient is sufficiently poisonous, secret, subterranean, *petty* - I call it the one immortal blemish of mankind... (II, 1235).

## IV

This blemish is not a scar, but a callous, because the association between God and man is a matter of industrial relations. Unitary being is the order of work. God who creates and conserves, man who toils; theology stinks of sweat. Long before Marx, it was monotheism that hallucinated the earth into a work-house.

> As soon as we imagine someone who is responsible for our being thus and thus, etc. (God, nature), and therefore attribute to him the intention that we should exist and be happy or wretched, we corrupt for ourselves the *innocence of becoming.* We then have someone who wants to achieve something through us and with us (III, 542).

History is industrial history, and it only has one goal, which is God. Nihilism is the loss of this goal, the nullifications of man's end, the reversion of all work to waste. It is in this sense that history is aborted by zero. There are those who in their eagerness for the continuation of effort take Nietzsche's overman to be a new goal, a restoration of teleology, a task commensurable with the nihilation of history. Perhaps Nietzsche himself succumbs to such a temptation at times, after all, German protestantism had poisoned his blood. It must nevertheless be insisted that the world of work perishes with the One, and that zero is an engine of war.

> When truth steps into the fight against the lies of millenia we shall have seisms, spasms of earthquake, a displacement of mountain and valley, the like of which has never been dreamed. The concept of politics then passes over totally into a war of the spirit, all power edifices of the old society are blasted into the air - they all rest upon the lie: there shall be wars as there have never been upon the earth. From myself onwards, for the first time, is there *great politics* on the earth (II, 1153).

Between war and industry is a unilateral difference; industry is different from war and war once again. This is why great politics is not just an episode of war, but the very tide of recurrence in its ferocity. Nothing is great but zero, and great politics is that for which the polis itself falls victim. Nietzsche is thus utterly incapable of consenting to the Aristotelian dictum, in his *Politics*, that 'the art of war is a natural subdivision of the art of acquisition' (Aristotle, 16), associated with his assertion that 'tame animals have a better nature than wild ones' (Ibid.). In its uninhibited and extravagant root war does not serve the state. Even in his earliest writings Nietzsche is explicit that the order of dependence is quite to the contrary, and that the polis - along with its telic integration - is a consequence of pre-political militarism. In a text from the early 1870's called *The Greek State* Nietzsche notes that:

> Whoever contemplates war and its uniformed possibility, the military [*Soldatenstand*], in relation to the previously outlined essence of the state, must come to the insight that through war and the military an image, or perhaps rather a blue-print of the state is set before our eyes. Here we see, as the most general effect of the tendency to war, an immediate separation and division of chaotic masses into military castes, upon which the edifice of the 'warrior society' raises itself, pyramidally, upon the lowest, broadest, slavish stratum. The unconscious purpose of the entire movement compels each individual under its yoke and generates even with heterogeneous natures a similar chemical transformation of their properites, until they are brought into purposive affinity (Nietzsche, III, 284).

Much later, and more importantly, Zarathustra tells us:

> You should love peace as a means to new wars. And the short peace more than the long one. I do not advise you to work, rather to

struggle (II, 312).

These are the most profound words in the history of military thought; the libidinal comprehension of peace as a unilateral differentiation from war. On its extensive or political plane war appears as the antagonistic juxtaposition of constellated forces, but on its intensive or cosmic axis it is a metamorphosis of forces; their relative decomposition from strategic ensembles and purposes, towards tactical fragments and initiatives; dissolvant excitations at the edge of zero, the goalless *polemos* of Herakleitean flux. In extension war can appear to be oriented to appropriation, domination, and subordination, but intensively it develops according to tendencies of subtilization, infiltration, and dissolution. It is not that there is merely a desire for war (variously named by Nietzsche the 'thirst for destruction' [III,821], 'the drive to destroy, anarchism, nihilism' [III, 708], 'will to nothingness' [II, 900, III, 738]): war in its intensive sense is desire itself, convulsive recurrence, unilateral zero.

War against mankind.

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